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KNIGHTON URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Medical Officer's Report for 1944.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,

I beg to submit an abbreviated Report for 1944.

Population. With the cessation of hostilities in Europe and the closing down of Works in the town and district, a large number of persons, temporarily resident in Knighton, have returned to their own districts and the population has decreased, though not to pre-war levels.

Overcrowding. Consequent on the reduction of population, overcrowding is not so acute as during the war period; even so, there are still a large number of houses which would not conform to statutory requirements.

Housing. There is a shortage of houses which is temporarily being met by utilisation of Bungalows belonging to the M.A.P. on the Fron-hir Estate. For the accommodation they offer, the rents are uneconomical and the bungalows are unsatisfactory as permanent dwellings for the following reasons: (1) Being built on concrete there is a good deal of condensation which makes the floors permanently damp (2) They are sited so that one of the two bedrooms faces North and receives no sun; this, together with fault (1) causes a damp unhealthy room (3) Insufficient wall thickness and roof space results in extreme fluctuations of internal temperature, especially as the living room is sited to face due South (4) In some instances there has been flooding. It is important that these buildings are not retained any longer than absolutely necessary and the Council have plans for utilising building sites on which can be erected from twenty to thirty new houses.

Bearing on the housing problem is the need for accommodation for visitors and the town requires at least one good hotel, houses prepared to take in holiday visitors and, possibly, a Youth Hostel.

Any scheme for improvement of housing and living conditions must take into consideration the provision of amusements and the district is in need of playings fields and an up-to-date Cinema.

Transport. On the whole this is poor. Better train and bus services are required.

Industries. Two small factories were transferred here during the War but have now closed down. Actually, there is not the population to provide labour for any ambitious industrial scheme but a small Works able to employ from a hundred to a hundred-and-fifty persons would be possible. The town is naturally situated to maintain its place as an auction centre and, with regard to this, the Council have a scheme for building an up-to-date Auction Yard; negotiations are proceeding with various firms of Auctioneers to ensure their co-operation.

Schools. At the outbreak of war the building of an excellent modern school was just completed; the premises were then taken over by the M.A.P. The present elementary school buildings are hopelessly out of date, badly situated and with a small playground opening directly on to the main road at a dangerous corner. The class-rooms are in poor repair, overcrowded, insufficiently heated and sanitation is unsatisfactory.

New elementary school buildings or the reconditioning of the school building taken over by the M.A.P. is one of the town's most urgent requirements. Similar criticisms apply to the secondary school, seven miles away, where several bus-loads of children from Knighton and district are transported daily.

A mid-day meal has been served daily to elementary school children at a canteen some three minutes walk from the school. The meals are of good quality and quantity and are much appreciated, particularly by children attending from a distance.

Cemetery. Negotiations have been proceeding for the acquisition of a site in the town for a new cemetery; a separate report has been submitted on this matter.

Ambulance. The second-hand ambulance purchased some years ago has filled a long-felt need but it will shortly require renewal.

Nursing. As pointed out on previous occasions, one district nurse is insufficient for a town of this size; during the Winter months the nurse has definitely too much to do.

Owing to war conditions unskilled nursing help in the home has been practically unobtainable and the situation has been aggravated by lack of accommodation in the general hospitals.

Hospitals. The natural outlet for hospital cases from this district is to Shrewsbury and, in spite of shortage of beds, no case requiring urgent attention has been refused.

The Poor Law Hospital in the twon has been increasingly useful for the nursing of old and chronic cases which are admitted from all parts of the County. Several maternity cases have been delivered where conditions or lack of domestic help have rendered it inadvisable to have the confinement at home,

The hospital has suffered from shortage of staff and has been carried on with unqualified nurses supervised by the Matron and one registered nurse.

Water. In dry seasons quantity is insufficient from local sources and has to be supplemented from the Birmingham supply.

Monthly analyses are carried out which show the raw water to be contaminated - the contamination is irregular and worse after a flush of rain.

All water for domestic use is treated and no samples, after passing the chlorinator, have been reported unfit for drinking purposes.

The supply is constant. 92% of houses are connected to the mains with taps in the houses, and 8% share joint taps connected to mains in the yard.

The water has no marked plumbo-solvent action.

Infectious Diseases. Twenty-eight cases of Measles were notified between April 18th and June 16th, 18 male and 15 female, ranging in age between 9 months and 28 years.

One case of diphtheria was notified but, on further investigation, proved to be streptococcal sore throat.

Tuberculosis. Two new cases were notified:-

1 male - abdominal - aged 10 years.
1 female - pulmonary - aged 24 years.

Two deaths were registered:-

1 male, aged 61 years - pulmonary.
1 female, aged 66 years - pulmonary.

Two persons received allowances under the Tuberculosis Allowances Scheme.

Carcinoma. Uncorrected figures show ten deaths from this complaint; 8 female and 2 male. The situations of the disease were as follows:- Bladder - 1; Breast - 1; Mediastinum - 1; Larynx - 1; Tongue - 1; Stomach - 2; Colon - 2; Rectum - 1.

With the exception of three cases, all were over the age of 70 years.

The high incidence of deaths from malignant disease was due to admissions to the Union Hospital from other parts of the County and to residents evacuated to the district from dangerous areas.

Births. Forty-one live births were registered - 27 male and 14 female. No still-births were reported.

One child under one year of age died of Congenital Heart Disease.

Deaths. Uncorrected figures show the number of deaths registered to be forty-four - 20 male and 24 female.

Contagious and Venereal Disease. There has been a marked decline in the number of cases of scabies.

Venereal disease is unusual in this area; cases can be referred to clinics at Shrewsbury or Hereford. As these centres are over thirty miles away, visits can only be made at infrequent intervals and treatment is usually carried out privately or under N.H.I. with occasional control of progress at the clinic. It is impossible for males to attend at the scheduled times and get back home the same night.

General Health. In spite of war conditions, the general health of the population has been good and, with the exception of the outbreak of measles in Spring, there has been no unusual incidence of epidemic disease.

I am, Gentlemen,
Your obedient servant,

G.H.H. BOOTH